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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Forty-fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 481st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 4 October 1993, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. LANUS (Argentina)

Chairman: Mr. BODDENS-HOSANG (Netherlands)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION (item 1 of the provisional agenda)

1. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN declared open the forty-fourth session of the Executive Committee.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN INDIA

2. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN, speaking on behalf of the Bureau and all delegations, expressed sympathy to the Government of India in connection with the recent earthquake in that country.

3. At the invitation of the temporary Chairman, the members of the Executive Committee observed a minute of silence in tribute to the victims of the earthquake.

STATEMENT BY THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN

4. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN, speaking as outgoing Chairman of the forty-third session, said that, over the past two years, UNHCR had had to face many new challenges and had achieved some signal successes. Its budget had been substantially increased, but the volume of refugee flows had risen still more sharply. Far from diminishing, the number of conflicts worldwide was on the increase. In the former Yugoslavia alone, more than 4 million people were now dependent on international aid; over 10 per cent of the population of Somalia and Liberia had fled beyond those countries' borders; 500,000 persons had been displaced as a result of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan; and new problems were developing in Bhutan and Togo.

5. Against that sombre background, attention must be drawn to UNHCR's achievements, especially in Central America, Cambodia and Mozambique, where voluntary returns were taking place on an unprecedented scale. In all, some 2,430,000 persons had returned voluntarily to their home countries, largely as a result of UNHCR's efforts.

6. He paid a special tribute to UNHCR officials at all levels for their selfless devotion and commitment to the organization's humanitarian ideals. He also commended the non-governmental organizations and their many volunteer field workers, and, of course, the donor countries, whose continuing support and solidarity deserved particular thanks. In conclusion, he expressed high esteem for the High Commissioner, whose work enjoyed the confidence and appreciation of all delegations.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (item 2 of the provisional agenda)

7. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to nominate candidates for the office of Chairman.

8. Mr. REYN (Belgium) nominated Mr. Boddens-Hosang (Netherlands).

9. Mr. TEJ BUNNAG (Thailand) and Mr. BENHIMA (Morocco) seconded the nomination.

10. Mr. Boddens-Hosang (Netherlands) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

11. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to nominate candidates for the office of Vice-Chairman.

12. Mr. JIN Yongjian (China) nominated Mr. Kamal (Pakistan).

13. Mr. MTANGO (Tanzania) and Mr. VAERNO (Norway) seconded the nomination.

14. Mr. Kamal was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

15. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to nominate candidates for the office of Rapporteur.

16. Mr. KASTBERG (Sweden) nominated Mr. Miranda (Nicaragua).

17. Mr. PAZ (Argentina) seconded the nomination.

18. Mr. Miranda (Nicaragua) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

19. Mr. Boddens-Hosang (Netherlands) took the Chair.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

20. The CHAIRMAN said that, as the lead agency in providing assistance to civilian victims of war, UNHCR had had to take on a task for which it had not been designed in 1950. Under the able guidance of the High Commissioner, however, the Office had shown itself to be not only capable of undertaking the additional task of trying to reach people in distress and need, but also flexible enough to adjust constantly to changing circumstances, often of a highly dangerous nature. Everyone present shared in the grief over lives lost in that effort. A special tribute was due to all those working in very difficult circumstances in various parts of the former Yugoslavia.

21. The past year had brought UNHCR moments of hope as well as of anxiety and concern. Hope and satisfaction were justified when a durable solution was found for refugees who could return safely to their country of origin, as was the case in Cambodia, Burundi, Ethiopia, northwest Somalia and South Africa. A similar situation seemed to have existed in Namibia, but only for a short period of time. It was to be hoped that Mozambique and Haiti would soon join the list of countries to which refugees could return in safety and dignity. On the other hand, great concern was aroused when new conflicts broke out or old ones were renewed, sometimes in a different form, as in Afghanistan, and UNHCR was called upon to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to refugees. Almost 19 million refugees now depended on UNHCR for assistance and the figure had a tendency to increase rather than decrease over the years.

22. An even larger number of internally displaced persons - approximately 24 million - also sought humanitarian assistance, protection and a solution to their problems, but were not covered by the 1951 Convention

relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol. As the High Commissioner explained in her note on international protection (A/AC.96/815, para. 48), the legal bases for UNHCR programmes on behalf of people within their own country were qualitatively different from those governing work on behalf of refugees in countries of asylum, and the particular activities undertaken therefore had to vary depending on the situation of the internally displaced. In view of the large number of such persons - a figure that also tended to increase rather than decrease - the time had come to reflect on ways and means of enabling the High Commissioner to provide assistance where called upon, bearing in mind the criteria mentioned in her report and particularly the condition that UNHCR's primary role of protection and assistance to refugees should not be jeopardized. He hoped that the general debate in the Executive Committee, as well as further discussions in the Subcommittee on Protection, would provide new ideas on that issue. It would also be seen from the Note on International Protection that the High Commissioner welcomed further refinement of the basic operational criteria for involvement in situations of internal displacement within the already existing baseline criteria and the legal mandate of UNHCR. She also underlined the importance of the need for a specific request from the Secretary-General or a competent principal organ of the United Nations and the consent of the State concerned, as well as the provision of sufficient resources for the activities in question. Those were legitimate concerns which deserved a response from the Executive Committee and, if necessary, from the General Assembly.

23. The strategy of prevention, preparedness and emergency response, as well as of preparing for solutions, which the High Commissioner was mandated to follow and which she was promoting with success, could succeed only with the assistance of Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. No one could say which aspect of UNHCR's work was more important than the others, although everyone recognized that the best solution would be not to have refugees at all. Governments and individuals could do a great deal to prevent the occurrence of refugee exoduses by removing or mitigating the main causes of conflicts and human rights abuses. That was not the task of the High Commissioner, who could only help to promote and support the international community's efforts to that end. In that respect, all Governments and organizations represented in the Committee could help to alleviate, at least in part, the High Commissioner's heavy task.

24. Another way in which the international community could help the High Commissioner was in making possible the safe and dignified return of refugees as fully fledged members of the national community. It could also help by strictly adhering to the principles of international law, including the principle of non-refoulement, and by providing the High Commissioner with the necessary human and financial resources. Who would have thought, some years previously, when UNHCR had been in serious financial difficulties, that only four years later a figure of over US$ 1 billion would be at stake? Still more was needed. Refugee situations, as well as refugee-like circumstances, preparedness, protection, prevention, return, emergency and humanitarian assistance, could be sustained only if all countries in a position to do so provided the necessary assistance.

25. Behind all those facets of policy, planning, programming and financing, it should not be forgotten that what was being discussed was the human factor of the refugee. People in need, in distress, under threat, homeless, exposed to the volatility of nature and climate, abused at times, hungry and often without hope for a better future in their own country were involved. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights stated that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person", but not everyone in the world was yet in a position to exercise that right. The Executive Committee had collectively to help UNHCR in providing assistance to "those unhappy people who are persecuted by fate, but did not by themselves commit any crime", in the words of Hugo Grotius. The members of the Executive Committee should work together in such a way that those people realized that the Executive Committee cared for them, in one form or another.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (Item 3 of the provisional agenda)(A/AC.96/XLIV/L.1)

26. The provisional agenda (A/AC.96/XLIV/L.1) was adopted.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4)

27. Mrs. OGATA (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), after welcoming all those present, said that it was encouraging to see an ever-growing number of non-governmental organizations attend the Executive Committee's meetings. She thanked the outgoing Chairman and congratulated the Executive Committee's new officers, whose wisdom and guidance would be of tremendous value during the coming year. She also paid a special tribute to the many heroic staff members working in the field, particularly those who, during the past year, had risked or lost their lives while serving others. Security was, in fact, a matter of special concern to her, since UNHCR's staff and other humanitarian workers had become targets of deliberate attacks. She was grateful to the Secretary-General for his repeated calls to the international community to prosecute and punish those responsible.

28. She had just returned from a journey to Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. She had visited two of the most generous asylum countries, which together had hosted more than 6 million Afghan refugees for over a decade. Fortunately, the region concerned was experiencing repatriation on an enormous scale; however, the hope for a lasting solution depended greatly on the improvement of conditions inside Afghanistan. Moreover, there were fears of new outflows, since instability and internal displacement characterized some of the countries bordering the region. The journey had highlighted many important issues, such as the challenge of solutions, prevention and presence, protection and asylum, and the need for resources.

29. Those issues should be viewed from the perspective of a humanitarian organization operating in a world which was still groping for a new order. The major challenges confronting the United Nations at the moment - on the one hand, that of maintaining peace and security and, on the other, that of promoting economic and social development - were both directly relevant to the humanitarian work of UNHCR, whose close collaboration with United Nations political initiatives was essential in order for it to be able to solve refugee problems and its close coordination with United Nations development

activities critical to ensure the viability of those solutions. Humanitarian assistance could make an important contribution to peace-keeping and peacemaking, but, as the situation in the former Yugoslavia so clearly demonstrated, humanitarian endeavours could not replace peace settlements or become a substitute for political negotiations.

30. That was the background to the issue of solutions to refugee problems. In Iran, she had seen long convoys of buses with Afghan refugees moving homewards to a country where security was fragile and economic prospects dim. Since the inception of the programme, some 2.5 million Afghan refugees had gone home, 1.9 million of them with the assistance of UNHCR. While the numbers were impressive, the reintegration possibilities were a source of concern. Lack of funds was severely inhibiting the continuation of UNHCR's repatriation activities, particularly in Iran, as well as the United Nations humanitarian assistance operation inside Afghanistan.

31. At the Executive Committee's session in 1991, she had predicted the beginning of a decade of voluntary repatriation. Since then, more than 3 million refugees had returned home. In the past year alone, refugees had returned to Tajikistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Burundi, South Africa and Guatemala. Earlier in the year, UNHCR had successfully completed, in the most complex conditions, the return of more than 370,000 refugees to Cambodia. Preparations for return to Mozambique were now complete. The first organized movements from Zimbabwe had already taken place, to be followed later in the current month by those from Swaziland and Zambia. Meanwhile, more than 350,000 Mozambicans had returned spontaneously, mainly from Malawi. In that context, she was encouraged by the recent signing of an agreement with the Government of South Africa which would give UNHCR access to Mozambican refugees in that country.

32. During her visit to Bangladesh in May 1993, she had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government on UNHCR's role in the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Myanmar. Following her private visit to Myanmar and a recent programming mission to the area, she was hopeful that a memorandum of understanding between the Government of Myanmar and UNHCR would be completed soon and would pave the way for the safe and voluntary return of the refugees in Bangladesh.

33. She was, however, disappointed that no solutions had so far materialized for the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and reiterated UNHCR's offer to assist the Governments concerned in that respect. Nor had there been much progress on repatriation to Eritrea and other parts of the Horn of Africa. She called on the Governments concerned to create the opportunities which would allow the refugees to exercise the right to return to their own country.

34. The desirability, feasibility and necessity of voluntary repatriation as a solution were evident, but so were its fragility, complexity and, at times, elusiveness. Often, refugees were returning to conditions of civil strife or instability, to situations where peace negotiations were still under way or not yet consolidated and to areas where infrastructure had been destroyed. Too many of UNHCR's repatriation operations were under-funded. Too little investment was made in post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Political settlement and economic rehabilitation were closely

linked. The international community must show greater willingness to support politically and financially what was not only the best solution to a refugee problem, but also an investment in regional and global stability.

35. If repatriation and reintegration were well planned in coordination with other United Nations agencies, they could lay the foundations for longer-term development. It should not be pretended that UNHCR's "quick-impact projects" were anything other than a modest, practical tool to assist reintegration by focusing on community needs. Yet that "bottom-up" approach might be a critical first step on the much quoted continuum from relief to development. Having successfully moved from Central America to Cambodia, "quick-impact projects" were now spreading to other operations throughout the world.

36. As refugees went home, so must UNHCR. After 14 years, its office in Nicaragua had been phased down and would be closed at the end of 1993, after the successful completion of 350 projects to promote the reintegration of returnees. Most of UNHCR's staff on the Cambodia operation had already been redeployed. On 30 September 1993, UNHCR's office in Suriname had been closed down.

37. With repatriation opportunities increasing, there was a need to examine the role of resettlement as a solution, particularly to meet protection needs. She invited interested Governments to hold further consultations with UNHCR on that subject.

38. As structures broke down, as central authority was challenged and as borders changed, an international presence in the country of origin was becoming an essential feature of UNHCR's preventive strategy. Through an international humanitarian presence, some measure of confidence, security and relief could be provided to victims of conflict or human rights violations who might otherwise feel compelled to cross borders or be unable to return home. In that sense, there was a close connection between presence, prevention and the pursuit of solutions.

39. While she had been in Iran, dramatic developments in neighbouring Azerbaijan had brought to the forefront the protection and assistance of the internally displaced as an important means of preventing refugee flows. UNHCR was extending protection and emergency assistance to some 210,000 persons in Azerbaijan who had been displaced by the recent fighting. The assistance from UNHCR's office in Baku was being augmented with cross-border support from its operation in Iran. She had decided on that parallel approach after receiving assurances from the Iranian Government that the borders would remain open for those who wished to seek asylum. She had alerted the Secretary-General to the situation, seeking his support to mobilize the political will to resolve the problem before it exploded into an even greater crisis.

40. Although she was heartened by the General Assembly's endorsement of UNHCR's activities on behalf of the internally displaced, she wished to make it clear that UNHCR was not seeking a global mandate to assist such persons. It was, however, prepared, at the request of the Secretary-General, to intervene on behalf of the internally displaced when its involvement could

have a preventive impact on refugee problems. For example, it could provide protection or assistance to displaced people who might otherwise feel compelled to become refugees.

41. Obviously, UNHCR's activities on behalf of the internally displaced must be premised on the necessary funds being available from the international community and on the consent of the country concerned. Where internal displacement posed a humanitarian problem, but there was no link to actual or potential refugee flows, UNHCR's role could be only a limited one, supporting the efforts of other organizations at the request of the Secretary-General.

42. UNHCR's contribution in the field of prevention was primarily catalytic and collaborative. As its efforts in Tajikistan and other parts of the former Soviet Union demonstrated, prevention could work only if it was part of a larger international effort to resolve the underlying causes of conflict and to ensure respect for human rights. Indeed, she could not adequately emphasize the need for an integrated and comprehensive approach by the United Nations system in that part of the world if the proliferation of humanitarian crises was to be contained. Prevention, like solutions, was cost-effective in the long term, but cost-intensive in the short term, often requiring considerable investment, particularly in terms of staffing to ensure presence. The international community was expected to respond more speedily and generously to support those efforts.

43. Prevention must be pursued not as an alternative to asylum, but in addition to it. The possibility of asylum must continue to remain open for those who sought it. While she was encouraged by the developments to provide temporary protection in situations of large-scale movements, she was also concerned by the fact that major reversals could be observed in the commitment to asylum. The cardinal principle of non-refoulement was being flouted in some parts of the world by those very States which supported UNHCR's international action most generously elsewhere. As she had said in her statement to the recent International Conference for the Protection of War Victims, the human suffering of the two World Wars had led to the emergence of certain cardinal legal and moral values to protect the individual, including the right to seek and enjoy asylum. States that were tempted to curb that right should carefully consider the pervasive and unscrupulous nature of military conflict today. Everyone should remember, particularly in the industrialized world, that wars and their appalling human consequences were not so remote in history. UNHCR had wanted the right of asylum to be more widely recognized and more generously granted to those fleeing from countries that today contemplated restricting that right. At a time when Europe was once again the scene of conflict and the source of large refugee outflows, the need to protect refugees had never been greater. If there was legitimate concern about how to manage irregular migratory flows, other means must be found to solve the problem. She called on the Executive Committee to continue to support UNHCR's unique protection mandate.

44. International protection must be accompanied by rapid and effective emergency response. During the past year, UNHCR's capacity to respond to emergencies had been tested with some success in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Ghana, Benin, Uganda and Liberia. At the moment, it was assessing emergency needs and providing some relief material to those

recently displaced in Georgia. Its emergency operation in the former Yugoslavia had expanded enormously since it had first begun. Today, UNHCR was assisting some 2.7 million people who were displaced and besieged in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in addition to over 1.3 million Bosnian refugees in neighbouring Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro. Prolonged war lasting into a second winter, the vicious and total disregard of humanitarian norms and the consequent security threats raised serious questions as to how long a civilian operation could continue in those circumstances. The spiral of emergencies had led UNHCR to strengthen further its preparedness and response capacity through standby arrangements. A total of 123 Nordic staff had been deployed to operations in 16 countries over the past two years following arrangements with the Danish and Norwegian Refugee Councils. A similar arrangement was now in place with the United Nations Volunteers and comparable measures with other bodies were being explored. UNHCR was also strengthening its partnership agreement with the World Food Programme to ensure that, together, the two agencies were better equipped to respond to all food emergencies.

45. She was grateful to the Executive Committee for increasing the Emergency Fund to US$ 25 million and the ceiling for any single emergency to US$ 8 million. At the same time, she was concerned that many of the so-called "silent" or "invisible" emergencies were not funded or only inadequately so. All emergencies should be treated equally as a matter of life or death for the refugees. UNHCR's responsibility was global and so should be its response.

46. Enhanced accountability and better delivery of programmes were both issues to which she was deeply committed. In addition to UNHCR's now well-established Emergency Preparedness and Response Teams, her Office had created a pool of emergency administrative staff to ensure that rapid response was coupled with improved accountability. In the pursuit of better programme delivery, she had established an internal Working Group on Programme Management and Operational Capacity, whose recommendations focused on greater delegation to the field and a modified UNHCR programming cycle to allow integrated planning and enhanced monitoring and reporting. The Working Group's recommendations were now in the process of being implemented. Her ultimate goal was to create an institutional culture where effective performance, efficiency and accountability were prized objectives. That was linked not only to improved programming, but also to better human resources management. In the course of 1993, an ambitious plan of action had been developed to cover such aspects as recruitment, career planning, training and performance evaluation. Steps were being taken to strengthen the Division of Human Resources Management with the necessary technical expertise to carry out the plan.

47. She had already referred to her deep concern about the difficult and dangerous conditions to which many UNHCR staff were daily exposed. The Field Safety Coordination Unit established in January 1993 had adopted a number of specific measures to improve staff security, in close coordination with United Nations Headquarters and other agencies. A modest beginning had also been made on stress management, a small but nevertheless important recognition of a serious problem affecting those working under the most demanding conditions.

48. UNHCR's General Programmes, which benefited some 13 million of the world's 19 million refugees and supported most of its worldwide protection responsibilities, was seriously under-funded. Although needs were going up, as reflected by the Executive Committee's decision to increase the 1993 target to US$ 413 million, the contributions of a number of the most important donors would be well below the 1992 level. With the carry-over from 1992, UNHCR would probably cover its 1993 General Programmes budget. However, what was really worrying was the funding of the 1994 General Programmes and a number of Special Programmes, particularly the repatriations to Mozambique, the Horn of Africa and, possibly, Liberia. If programmes were cut back, the first to suffer would be those services which benefited refugee women and children most. She appealed strongly to as many Governments as possible to announce contributions at the Pledging Conference in New York on 10 November 1993. A generous response then and in the remaining months of the year would make the early days of 1994 less gloomy.

49. The gap was clearly growing between what UNHCR was asked to do and what it could do. As a turbulent world searched for a new equilibrium, there was no doubt that UNHCR would continue to face many demands in the next few years. Its main focus would probably remain on Africa, but it might also have to respond to new and ongoing emergencies, increasingly in areas where it had never operated before and where severe winters would require intensive measures to meet shelter and energy needs. At the same time, repatriation opportunities would continue to demand more resources. To meet that challenge, UNHCR would have to look for both internal and external improvements. Internally, it would have to improve its own performance and accountability and, externally, to work with others to enhance its capacity, maximize its resources and enlarge support for a coherent and comprehensive strategy on refugee problems. A five-point partnership lay ahead.

50. First, UNHCR must continue to work closely with the political arms of the United Nations and regional organizations to ensure that its humanitarian response was paralleled by political initiatives to resolve refugee-producing conflicts. The dangerously recurrent nature of many refugee emergencies, particularly in Africa, only underlined the strong need for the international community to make concerted and energetic efforts to pursue political solutions. With humanitarian action becoming an important component of many peace-keeping or peacemaking operations, the challenge was to ensure that the independent, non-political and impartial nature of humanitarian action was preserved, perceived as such and respected by all. UNHCR must redouble its efforts to adhere strictly to the fundamental neutral and non-political principles that had governed its policies and programmes and had given it the credibility without which it could not operate in any meaningful way.

51. Secondly, UNHCR should continue to develop its cooperation with the humanitarian organizations within and outside the United Nations system, so as to maximize comparative advantages. She looked forward to close collaboration with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in its efforts to mobilize the system's response to complex emergencies and address the continuum from relief to development. Furthermore, as UNHCR operated increasingly in situations of conflict, it must deepen further its institutional contacts with the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to enhance complementarity. Equally, the linkages between migration and refugee flows called for the

strengthening of UNHCR's partnership with the International Organization for Migration. She attached particular importance to their joint programmes of mass information, which helped people to be informed about the opportunities and consequences of their movement before they decided to leave their homes.

52. Thirdly, NGOs were UNHCR's quickest partners in emergency response and its strongest advocates on international protection. Their community-based approach was an asset in bridging the gap between relief and development. Their ability to mobilize public support and donor assistance was critical at a time of heightened demand. The decision to award the 1993 Nansen Medal to Médecins sans Frontières was a recognition of the NGO contribution to the refugee cause. UNHCR had initiated a process of consultation with NGOs called PARINAC or Partnership in Action, which was intended to lay the basis for enhanced and improved future NGO/UNHCR collaboration. Six preparatory regional meetings were to culminate in a global conference in Oslo in June 1994.

53. Fourthly, UNHCR must further deepen its collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF and other development organizations. UNHCR was exploring partnership arrangements with the World Bank and regional banks, which had an important role to play in dealing with the economic and social causes underlying coerced movements, as well as in post-conflict reconstruction to consolidate peace agreements.

54. Lastly, she relied on the continued cooperation and support of Governments, whether of countries of origin, asylum or donors. She was deeply grateful for the unquantifiable contribution made by countries of asylum as well as to the major donors, which, despite all difficulties, had responded magnificently over the past two years. She nevertheless appealed to them once again in the strongest terms to do everything possible to maintain, as a minimum, their level of contribution to UNHCR.

55. During the past three years, she had visited 46 countries. During the same period, the number of refugees had increased from 15 to 19 million. Some 5 million refugees had returned home. UNHCR had seen its budget soar from US$ 544 million to almost US$ 1.3 billion, its staff rise from 2,400 to almost 4,000 persons. Dramatic developments had been matched by explosive growth. Looking back over the past three years and looking ahead, she was more than ever convinced that UNHCR's mission was as unique as it was gratifying. She was deeply appreciative of UNHCR's privileged partnership with member and observer States of the Executive Committee, the United Nations system and international and non-governmental organizations. Together, they must continue their pursuit of protection and solutions for the world's refugees. Their strategy must be based on partnership, their approach on solidarity. The goal must be human security for all and she committed UNHCR to that course.

56. Mr. WIRTH (United States of America) said that the changes and choices the world now faced were as demanding as any it had known since World War II, but their nature and the speed with which they proliferated were remaking the missions of governments and the agencies of the United Nations.

57. That historic transformation demanded that countries should liberate themselves from outworn policies and old assumptions which had only yesterday seemed to be the dividing and defining lines of international affairs.

58. People were on the move and were both the cause and consequence of new forces for change. Some were fleeing ethnic and political conflict, others were leaving lands that could no longer support the burgeoning population or cope with environmental degradation. A fresh approach to the circumstances of refugees, displaced persons and migrants in the world at the present time required sustained, profound and imaginative attention.

59. He stressed the need for an enlightened and aggressive international programme that focused on world population growth. The global population of 5.5. billion included hundreds of millions with little or no opportunity for self-fulfilment, education, employment or personal security. World population growth to 8, 10 or even 13 billion would bring even greater political alienation, instability and unsustainable economic development, enough to make impossible the daunting tasks faced by UNHCR and the public and private organizations that met the needs of the world's refugees and dealt with humanitarian crises.

60. His country had rejoined the crucial global population programmes, reversing 12 years of studied neglect. It looked forward to working with all countries to promote voluntary family planning, carefully coordinated with women's health, education and empowerment programmes. It believed that a crucial international priority must be the provision of family planning to everyone who wanted it.

61. The United Nations system must be strengthened in its ability to deal with human rights violators. New mechanisms, such as the establishment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights, were necessary to give the issue the attention it deserved.

62. Referring to the call by the High Commissioner for Refugees for new approaches to address coerced movements preemptively by supporting the "right to remain", he said that his country endorsed that concept, for defending an individual's right to live in safety and dignity in his own home and country of origin was the logical culmination of respect for human rights. Democratic and tolerant societies, where national minorities lived free of persecution, did not produce refugees and his country set the promotion of democratic societies and the related rule of law among its top priorities.

63. For nations devastated by war, it was necessary to forge a link from emergency assistance to sustainable development if peace and stability were to be maintained.

64. The United States was encouraged that the new Administrator of UNDP had stressed his commitment to join in the solution of humanitarian emergencies. It looked forward to UNDP using the tools of development and technical cooperation in the transition from refugee reintegration to national reconstruction.

65. Recalling that President Clinton had underlined the United States commitment to the priority of sustainable development in his recent statement to the General Assembly, he said that opportunity for all in today's world required a viable economic base, which must strive to meet the needs of the current generation without robbing from future generations.

66. Perhaps the most essential component of improved emergency response was improved coordination. His Government was pleased with the efforts made by UNHCR to solidify its cooperation with other United Nations agencies. In that regard, he referred to the outstanding examples of coordination shown by humanitarian agencies in the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia and Africa. There was still room for improvement, however, and his delegation looked to the leadership of all relevant United Nations agencies to promote a "culture of cooperation" to reduce inefficiency and close gaps in relief programmes.

67. When humanitarian assistance was carried out in concert with peace-keeping operations, the challenge of effective coordination was greatly amplified. Compassion and commitment to meeting humanitarian needs should be sufficient to prompt an examination of the lessons learned in delivering assistance in conflict zones in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and northern Iraq. If they were not, then financial considerations alone could compel it, since billions of dollars were involved in combined peace-keeping and humanitarian operations.

68. The other critical element of improved emergency response was preparedness. Lofty goals and good intentions were no substitute for skilled personnel and accessible stockpiles of supplies. Effective, efficient partnerships with NGOs were an essential complement to the work of international organizations.

69. Referring to the need for adequate and steady funding, he recalled that the United States had urged in 1992 that the General Programme should be given increased funding and flexibility so that UNHCR could respond quickly and adequately to changing needs. He was pleased to announce that an additional unearmarked contribution of $19 million placed his Government's contribution to the 1993 UNHCR General Programme at over $91 million and its cash contribution to the combined General and Special Programmes at $184.4 million.

70. The most visible Special Programme was in the former Yugoslavia. Bosnians would soon face their second winter in conflict. UNHCR appeared to be on schedule in the procurement of winter survival materials. In view of the need to maintain delivery of those life-saving items throughout the fall, he announced a new cash pledge to UNHCR of $2.3 million for winterization needs in Bosnia; that would bring his country's overall Government effort in the former Yugoslavia to $277.6 million in 1993. He urged other members of the Executive Committee and donors to contribute in cash or in kind to provide critical supplies for winter operations.

71. Another factor in the relief equation was the protection and assistance provided to refugee women and children. The United States welcomed the progress made so far by UNHCR to integrate the needs and abilities of refugee women and the needs of refugee children and looked forward to further progress. He stressed the need to move beyond rhetoric and adopt practical

approaches. Providing for the security of women to reduce sexual violence and exploitation was essential. The medical needs of refugee women, including access to family planning and health services, must be factored into field programming. Increasing attention had to be paid to health, nutrition and education as UNHCR implemented its revised guidelines on refugee children.

72. Mr. REYN (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that, from the global standpoint, 1993 had clearly been a dramatic year for UNHCR, not only because of the increased number of refugees and displaced persons, but also because of increasingly obvious violations of the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights, the growing insecurity of working conditions and obstacles placed in the way of humanitarian actions for political purposes by the parties in conflict.

73. In Europe, the continued fighting and deteriorating humanitarian system in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Croatia were still a primary concern of the international community. In view of the ongoing implementation of the policy of ethnic cleansing, enforced displacements and deliberate efforts to starve the population, his delegation was seriously concerned now that winter was approaching. In that regard, he drew special attention to the tragic fate of women and children, the main victims of the conflict. He reiterated the wholehearted support of the European Community and its member States for the remarkable work being done by UNHCR in connection with its programme for the former Yugoslavia, as well as for the untiring efforts being made by the two negotiators of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia to bring about an equitable solution to the conflict and the rapid restoration of peace. Since the beginning of the conflict in 1991, the European Community and its member States had contributed US$ 945 million for assistance operations in the former Yugoslavia, i.e. 65 per cent of total contributions. Of that amount, UNHCR had received US$ 373 million and he assured the High Commissioner of the Community's continued support.

74. His delegation wanted to continue to be involved in the formulation of the humanitarian action strategy and drew attention to the exemplary initiative taken by UNHCR and donor countries to establish a consortium for shelter, infrastructure and energy. The consortium would not only deal with the emergency situation, but would also be involved in the reconstruction phase.

75. The humanitarian implications of the conflicts in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were also a matter of great concern both in humanitarian terms and in terms of regional peace and security. In central Asia, the refugee situation in Tajikistan and the continuing programme for the repatriation of 1.5 million Afghans gave rise to similar concerns.

76. He drew attention to the dramatic plight of the Shiite population of southern Iraq and stressed the need to implement a programme of assistance for those refugees. He also expressed concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation of the Kurdish population in northern Iraq.

77. With regard to repatriation programmes in Asia, he drew attention to the success of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees, including the resettlement programme launched and financed mainly by the

European Community, and to the repatriation of some 360,000 Cambodian refugees. The Community also welcomed the forthcoming implementation of an agreement on the repatriation of Rohingas refugees in Myanmar.

78. Africa continued to be hard hit by the problem of refugees and displaced persons resulting primarily from ethnic conflicts. In Somalia, the concerted action of UNOSOM and humanitarian agencies had brought about a definite improvement in the food supply situation. However, the humanitarian and policy objectives of such operations must continue to be given priority. Except in Mogadishu, relatively satisfactory conditions of security had been restored, and that had made it possible to begin reconstruction, with the implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). In that context, the Community supported the programme for the repatriation and reintegration of all refugees in conditions of security and dignity.

79. Angola, torn apart by 18 years of conflict, was also at the heart of the Community's concern. The Community was closely following the situation in southern Sudan and paying particular attention to the freedom of access and proper conduct of humanitarian operations in that region.

80. While the situation remained precarious in many other African countries, there was a glimmer of hope as a result of the recent conclusion of peace agreements in Rwanda and Eritrea that paved the way for the voluntary repatriation of refugees. The Community was in favour of efforts to speed up the ambitious repatriation and reintegration programme for 1.5 million refugees in Mozambique launched following the peace agreement signed in Rome in October 1992 and welcomed the recent breakthrough achieved in Liberia following the signature of the Cotonou agreements. It also welcomed the signature, in September 1993, of an historic agreement between South Africa and UNHCR authorizing UNHCR to exercise its mandate for the protection and assistance of all refugees in South Africa.

81. In Central America, attention should be drawn to the successful repatriation and reintegration process conducted within the framework of CIREFCA. The Community recognized that voluntary repatriation in conditions of security and dignity was the most appropriate solution for refugees and therefore welcomed UNHCR's initiative for the definition of repatriation guidelines. The repatriation of refugees should, however, be accompanied by their full reintegration into the economic and social life of their country. In the context of reconstruction, the international community should help to remove mines from former areas of conflict.

82. The Community confirmed its appreciation of regular exchanges of information organized by UNHCR through informal meetings of the Executive Committee and took note of the important work being done in the Subcommittee of the Whole on International Protection and the Subcommittee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

83. While supporting the principle of establishing an inspector's office to carry out a global evaluation of UNHCR's field activities, the Community stressed the need for a careful examination of the budgetary implications of such a decision and for the redeployment of staff resources within UNHCR. With regard to prevention and solutions, it drew attention to the possibility

that UNHCR might cooperate with the competent United Nations bodies in the human rights field, to its active involvement in the protection and assistance of displaced persons and to its protection mandate in time of conflict and in voluntary repatriation situations.

84. The Community and its member States welcomed the revision of the initial guidelines concerning refugee children. They also expressed their support in principle for the draft conclusions on the personal security of refugees and refugee protection and sexual violence. They expressed their appreciation of the work being done in the informal working group on temporary protection for nationals of the former Yugoslavia and undertook to continue that informal dialogue with UNHCR in order to harmonize to the greatest possible extent the implementation of temporary protection measures for those persons.

85. In accordance with their humanitarian tradition and the principles of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the member States of the European community had granted and continued to grant asylum and protection to persons who had reason to fear persecution for the reasons referred to in the Convention. They were concerned at the fact that the growing number of abusive requests for asylum in western Europe were seriously threatening refugee reception. At present, the majority of asylum-seekers were neither refugees within the meaning of the Convention nor persons authorized to remain in a particular country for other imperative reasons.

86. In order to guarantee that asylum-seekers enjoyed all their recognized rights, it was necessary to combat abusive requests, which overburdened procedures for the determination of refugee status, delayed recognition of refugees who genuinely needed protection and undermined the integrity of the institution of asylum. The member States of the Community had therefore concentrated their efforts in two directions. First, they had adopted the rules for determining responsibility for examining applications for asylum, which were embodied in the Dublin Convention of 15 June 1990 and were designed to organize the orderly handling of applications for asylum and to prevent asylum-seekers from becoming refugees in orbit. Secondly within the framework of the harmonization of asylum policies, the ministers of the member countries had met in December 1992 and had adopted two resolutions, one relating to manifestly unfounded requests for asylum and the other to third receiving countries. In any event, a distinction had to be made between persons who were genuine asylum-seekers, within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention, and economic immigrants. The process of making that distinction would not affect the situation of genuine refugees, but would enable Governments to determine their status rapidly and reliably and to provide them with the necessary protection. A solution also had to be found to the problem of refugees whose request for asylum had been denied and who were in unlawful situations, including the negotiation of agreements for their readmission. In that context, the Community countries undertook to continue their action to combat racism and xenophobia and urged the international community as a whole to do the same.

87. Noting that the traditional donor countries were experiencing difficulties in keeping pace with UNHCR's increasing financial requirements, he said that the European Community and its member countries, which were UNHCR's largest contributors, financed more than 40 per cent of the overall

budget. During the past two years, they had also contributed substantial amounts of food aid through the World Food Programme. They once again assured UNHCR of their continued support, even though they had their own budgetary problems. They drew attention to the need to ensure more burden-sharing between the small number of traditional donors and called for the financial cooperation of other wealthy States in order to cope with the considerable challenges of the future. They encouraged UNHCR to build its partnership with the other humanitarian agencies of the United Nations system, with NGOs and with the European Community, since increased cooperation would also contribute to burden-sharing.

88. In that connection, they welcomed the excellent cooperation in the field between UNHCR and ICRC and stressed the importance of the coordination role played by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs with a view to dealing appropriately and quickly with complex, large-scale emergency situations.

89. In conclusion, he said that the Community and its member States once again commended the staff of UNHCR on its courage and determination and assured it of their support.

90. Mr. KULLAVANIJAYA (Thailand) said that, for nearly half a century, UNHCR had had the daunting responsibility of providing humanitarian protection and assistance to persons in need on a global scale. His country had worked closely with UNHCR for nearly two decades in joint efforts to care for hundreds of thousands of displaced persons from neighbouring countries, guided by the principles of humanitarianism, compassion for fellow human beings, sovereignty and national security.

91. From the beginning, Thailand and other ASEAN countries had stressed that, whatever durable solution was found for Indo-Chinese refugees and displaced persons, no residual cases should be left in the countries of first asylum. At present, 45,000 Indo-Chinese refugees and displaced persons, specifically 33,000 Laotians and 12,000 Vietnamese, remained in Thailand. The only durable solution for them was voluntary repatriation. While a number of problems still existed in the implementation of the repatriation plan adopted at the fourth Thai-Lao-UNHCR Tripartite Meeting held in Laos in 1991, his Government believed that, through mutual understanding and effective tripartite coordination, the repatriation process could be further accelerated. Thailand would continue to do its utmost to implement the plan. However, there was an urgent need for financial support from UNHCR and the international community to develop the socio-economic infrastructure in Laos in order to enable it to absorb a larger number of Laotian returnees.

92. Thailand had closed Ban Vinai camp in December 1992. The Chiangkam and Na Pho camps would be closed by the end of 1993 and 1994, respectively. In view of the appalling environmental degradation caused by the presence of the refugee camps, UNHCR should provide assistance for the rehabilitation of those camp sites once they had been closed.

93. With regard to the question of the Vietnamese boat people, his Government welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA). At the same time, it was concerned about obstacles to the achievement of the objectives of the CPA. It was therefore pleased to hear

that UNHCR would convene the CPA Steering Committee at the beginning of 1994. That would provide the parties concerned with an opportunity to consider appropriate modalities for a speedy and durable solution to the problem of Indo-Chinese refugees within a specific time-frame.

94. The repatriation of Cambodian refugees and displaced persons had been the most remarkable achievement of all in the attempts to solve the Indo-Chinese refugee problem over the past decade. A total of 370,000 Cambodians had returned home in safety and dignity, thanks to cooperation and support from many bodies, particularly UNHCR and UNTAC. He expressed appreciation to all concerned for their dedicated efforts.

95. Despite the success achieved, much remained to be done because the problem of displacement did not automatically end with the return of the last group of displaced persons. The root causes of the problem must be addressed. He urged the international community, development institutions and non-governmental organizations to continue their contributions to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Cambodia. The Thai Government was ready to cooperate with all interested parties in that humanitarian programme. It had sent two engineering battalions of the Royal Army to demine and repair the main highway routes in Cambodia.

96. The fighting going on in Cambodia was a cause of concern. Since such incidents could result in the return of Cambodians to first-asylum countries, UNHCR should maintain its presence in Cambodia for some of time in order to provide protection and assistance for Cambodians affected by any renewal of hostilities.

97. There had been some misunderstanding of late about the Thai Government's policy towards nationals of Myanmar. In September 1991, the Thai Government had decided to establish a safe area for a group of Myanmar students in order to provide them with a structured programme of humanitarian assistance and prevent them from being inadvertently deported along with other illegal immigrants from Myanmar. Representatives of interested foreign agencies and international and private organizations, including UNHCR, had been fully briefed about the safe area and given access to it and they had all agreed that that measure would provide the students with the best care and maintenance. In order to be eligible to stay in the safe area, the students had been required to register with the competent Thai authorities. To date, well over 100 Myanmar students had registered to stay in the safe area.

98. He expressed appreciation to all the parties concerned, particularly the High Commissioner and her staff, for the generous support they had given Thailand in its attempts to find a durable solution for the refugees and persons displaced from neighbouring countries. His Government requested the international community to continue to be concerned with the problem and to provide the High Commissioner with all the resources required to overcome the daunting problems, in a world in transition, of displaced persons including those who remained in Thailand and the other first-asylum countries of South-East Asia.

99. Mr. GLEN (Canada) noted that the demands placed on UNHCR over the past year had been unprecedented. His country welcomed the achievements of the High Commissioner and her staff, particularly the dedicated individuals in the field who had worked so hard and so well on behalf of refugees throughout the year. In addition to the immediate difficulties confronted daily in refugee situations around the world, UNHCR had also had to contend with the problem of marshalling sufficient resources at a time when many Governments, including his own, were facing internal budget problems. In the past year, Canada had been able to maintain, and even to increase, its contributions, but it might not be able to repeat that performance in future.

100. The High Commissioner had made her first official visit to Canada in early 1993. Her presence had served to highlight Canada's collaboration with her Office in dealing with international crises and to make the Canadian public more aware of the plight of the world's millions of refugees. The High Commissioner's visit to the monument in Ottawa to Canada's peace-keepers had been an appropriate gesture that had acknowledged one of Canada's most visible contributions to the United Nation's efforts to promote peace and security for all, including refugees.

101. Respect for human rights and the application of the principles of good governance were instrumental in preventing forced displacements of peoples and outflows of asylum-seekers. discussions in forums such as OECD, CSCE, the Council of Europe and other regional organizations, as well as in the United Nations system, should be utilized to develop comprehensive strategies for dealing with the root causes of displacement and exodus. Stable and democratically elected Governments that respected human rights and fostered economic and social progress did not give their populations reason to flee and strong civil societies were better able to resolve conflicts internally when they did arise. Sustainable development must be recognized as a vital support for strong and self-confident civil administrations.

102. With regard to protection, the situation in many parts of the world remained an intolerable affront to civilization. In the former Yugoslavia, millions of people had been displaced and thousands killed or wounded. Very real problems remained in Somalia, Liberia, Angola and many other countries, despite success stories with refugees in Indo-China and South Africa and major new hopes in the Middle East. New refugee situations were developing, for example, in Tajikistan and other areas of the former Soviet Union. The current situation in Moscow illustrated the complex interrelationship between economic development, human rights and democracy and created a political challenge that could have unforeseen consequences - not least for refugees in Russia and Eastern Europe.

103. International efforts to contain such situations had demanded vastly greater amounts of money and supplies. UNHCR's budget for 1993 would exceed US$ 1.2 billion. And yet no end to many of the world's refugee problems was in sight.

104. Through its own system for determining the status of refugees, Canada continued to seek ways to ensure that the most vulnerable refugees were treated with the greatest understanding and sensitivity. Procedural guidelines for the consideration of claims to refugee status made in Canada by

women had recently been issued by the Canadian immigration and refugee board. The guidelines called for due attention to special problems, such as persecution through sexual violence, that affected women refugees disproportionately. Canada had also taken steps to improve the assistance provided to women refugees internationally. It believed that the profile and influence of Office of the Coordinator for Refugee Women must be preserved and extended to cover all of UNHCR's activities in the field.

105. Many persons displaced from their homes could not legally qualify for international assistance as refugees because they were still located in their countries of citizenship. Yet considerations relating to national sovereignty and the practical ability of United Nations organizations to gain access to displaced persons meant that the internal displacement of populations should continue to be dealt with on the basis of case-by-case requests from the Secretary-General to the appropriate agency.

106. Comprehensive policy strategies designed to preserve and enhance the principle of the protection of refugees were currently being discussed in a wide range of international institutions, including the informal intergovernmental consultations on refugee, asylum and migration policies in Europe, North America and Australia. Having recently presided over the informal consultations, Canada thanked UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration for their support for that group over the past year.

107. Durable solutions to refugee crises could be achieved only where all parties concerned found ways to work together effectively. The Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees was a prime example of such cooperation. Canada had contributed greatly to resettlement efforts and counted on other countries to make similar contributions. While the Comprehensive Plan of Action could not be taken as a universal model for solving refugee problems, its essential element - that people who could go home safely should do so - was fundamental to UNHCR's activities in other parts of the world. Where return was not possible, the receiving countries should make every effort to facilitate local integration, particularly in cases where temporary asylum had become de facto permanent residence. Sometimes, however, the generosity of host and donor countries had created an unhealthy dependency, generating expectations beyond the realm of the possible. UNHCR should examine ways in which refugees could contribute to their care and maintenance while in a host country and specifically, how refugees could help to mitigate environmental damage in receiving countries.

108. All of UNHCR's operational activities must focus on practical, flexible, case-by-case coordination with partners both in and outside the United Nations system. Collaborative arrangements and clear statements of accountability among United Nations agencies were the precondition for cost-effectiveness and improved delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs had a leading role to play in emergency situations, where it could contribute the necessary resources and expertise.

109. Canada recognized the enormous burden borne by UNHCR and the real difficulties that lay ahead. The Office could depend on Canada's continuing assistance in its efforts to protect the interests of the world's refugees.

110. Mr. ENDO (Japan) said that, with the end of the cold war, the international community had been expected to seek peace and prosperity on the basis of the universal principles of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights. Japan was stupefied, however, to see that ethnic, religious and other conflicts had surfaced in many parts of the world. While solutions to those conflicts should be sought in their proper context, the international community could not shy away from coping with the resulting refugee problems and human rights abuses.

111. As the Japanese Prime Minister had stated at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Japan was committed to humanitarian causes. It regarded humanitarian assistance as one of its major contributions to world affairs and had been wholeheartedly supporting the activities of one of the main actors in that field, UNHCR. Since 1991, the High Commissioner had done remarkable work, drawing on her insight and dedication to the cause. His Government intended that she should continue to discharge her responsibility as the head of the organization. He paid a tribute to the staff of UNHCR, who had responded to emergencies with a sense of compassion and commitment to alleviating the plight of the more than 18 million refugees throughout the world.

112. In the former Yugoslavia, the second winter since the outbreak of hostilities would soon set in, aggravating the population's hardships. The international community had been providing humanitarian assistance for over a year and a half, yet the need for assistance would now be even greater, with no certain prospects that the conflict would be settled. The world had also witnessed other complex and urgent humanitarian crises in areas such as the Horn of Africa and the Central Asian portion of the former Soviet Union.

113. The international humanitarian effort was undergoing a major financial and institutional crisis. The United Nations and other agencies must address such problems in a comprehensive manner. The allocation of financial resources should be determined by taking into account the needs and capabilities of the organizations concerned. There should be prompt and efficient coordination among them in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to enable humanitarian assistance to be effective. Japan welcomed the enhanced cooperation based on the revised working arrangements made between UNHCR and the World Food Programme since January 1992. It hoped that that kind of arrangement would be developed with other agencies.

114. In conflict situations such as those in the former Yugoslavia or Somalia, free access to all parts of the region was crucial to the security of the staff working there and to the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. Convoys were now often blocked, hijacked or required to make unexpected payments, however, and humanitarian workers were targets for attack. Such actions must be strongly condemned. Since, in many cases, humanitarian activities were being carried out alongside peace-keeping operations, it had become increasingly necessary for humanitarian agencies to work in close contact with the Departments of Peace-keeping Operations and of Political Affairs, while still retaining their impartiality.

115. His country greatly appreciated the note on international protection (A/AC.96/815) and had a number of comments to make on it. UNHCR had become increasingly involved in preventive activities in countries of origin. As the note rightly pointed out, however, UNHCR's contribution must be primarily catalytic and collaborative. In conflict situations such as that in the former Yugoslavia, an appropriate division of labour with other agencies, particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross or the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, was necessary. In respect of internally displaced persons, the case for protection and assistance within a country's borders should be carefully considered. The need for such assistance must be acknowledged on a case-by-case basis, taking account of UNHCR's mandate and resources.

116. Voluntary repatriation was a most desirable solution and his country welcomed the fact that some 360,000 refugees had returned to Cambodia in early 1993. Japan hoped that large-scale repatriations in Mozambique, Afghanistan, Guatemala, Ethiopia and Somalia would be carried out in safety and dignity. To ensure that the return of refugees and displaced persons was durable, rehabilitation and reconstruction were crucial. In that respect, UNHCR's role should be a catalytic one and its activities should be transitional and complementary. Japan hoped that the Quick Impact Projects which UNHCR had undertaken in Cambodia in close cooperation with UNDP and to which the Japanese Government had contributed, would be completed successfully.

117. Eliminating root causes was undoubtedly the best way of finding solutions. The refugee problem in Africa, for example, was linked to poverty. The emergency situation there and, in particular, the influx of refugees put pressure on resources originally intended for development, destroyed basic infrastructure and weakened prospects for investment and trade. Japan was now hosting an international conference on African development to discuss the issues of relief and development extensively.

118. His delegation was pleased to note that the CPA had been making substantial progress, including in respect of voluntary repatriation. Yet over 500 Vietnamese boat people had arrived in Japan in 1993. As one of the major donors to the CPA, Japan believed that the time had come to start examining measures other than the voluntary repatriation of boat people. Japan greatly appreciated the recent private visit by the High Commissioner and the follow-up technical mission to Myanmar.

119. In 1993, UNHCR's budget had increased to US $1.27 billion, reflecting the international community's support for and expectations of UNHCR's activities. Because of the strained financial situation, however, the donors were keeping a watchful eye on UNHCR's budget. His delegation placed great emphasis on UNHCR's efficiency, transparency and accountability. It greatly appreciated the High Commissioner's belief that UNHCR must maintain high moral and professional standards. Japan supported the High Commissioner's proposal for the establishment of an inspectorate as a way of gaining a comprehensive assessment of UNHCR's performance and also supported her efforts to set up a working group on programme management and operational capacity.

120. Japan pledged an additional contribution of US$ 20 million to support UNHCR's programmes, including those in Africa and the CPA. It would also continue to support the activities of the Coordinator on environmental issues.

121. Mr. JIN Yongjian (China) said that, with the alleviation of tension and the political settlement of some hot-spots, some refugee issues had been resolved gradually over the past year. Yet the global refugee situation continued to deteriorate. Solving existing refugee problems and preventing new ones had become a real challenge to the international community. China supported the efforts made by UNHCR and other United Nations bodies, in accordance with their respective mandates, to contribute to coordinated endeavours to reach a rapid solution to refugee problems.

122. The High Commissioner had pointed out that, while humanitarian assistance helped to alleviate tension and facilitated reconciliation, it could not replace political settlement, and that humanitarian assistance should be linked with long-term development. China shared those views. Peace and development were preconditions for eliminating the root causes of refugee problems and guaranteeing their comprehensive settlement. Only when sustainable development had been achieved in a peaceful environment could people live in contentment and prosperity.

123. The Chinese Government was willing to join the efforts of the international community to promote world peace and development. Regional hot-spots, armed aggression, civil strife, poverty, economic underdevelopment and natural disasters were the major sources of many refugee flows. It was imperative to prevent ethnic conflicts, stop foreign aggression and occupation, settle disputes peacefully, respect State sovereignty and make concerted efforts to achieve regional and global peace and stability. International cooperation should be strengthened with a view to promoting the economic development of developing countries, alleviating their burdens and establishing a new economic order based on equality and mutual benefit. Only by such efforts would it be possible to prevent new waves of refugees.

124. A solution to the refugee problem was the shared duty of the international community and therefore called for coordinated actions by countries of asylum, origin and settlement, as well as donor countries. In view of the deteriorating situation of refugees worldwide, the international community should redouble its efforts. Refugees should be enabled to return to their homelands in safety and dignity, through negotiations between the countries concerned, in cooperation with UNHCR.

125. At present, the developing countries sheltered the overwhelming majority of refugees worldwide. They had shouldered a heavy economic burden that affected their economic development and social stability. As one of the settlement countries for Indo-Chinese refugees, China expressed appreciation for the sacrifices made by other countries in granting asylum and accommodation to large numbers of refugees. It was to be hoped that such efforts would be appreciated by the international community and that existing refugee problems would not be ignored in the face of emerging new ones. Attention should continue to be given to refugee problems in Asia, Africa and Latin America and continued assistance was also required.

126. China acknowledged the need to enhance the ability of the international community to respond rapidly to emergencies, but it also held the view that UNHCR's non-political and humanitarian objectives had special significance and guaranteed the smooth progress of its activities. His Government hoped that UNHCR would uphold that principle in its efforts to establish a quick response mechanism. In providing humanitarian protection and assistance, UNHCR should follow the principle of respecting State sovereignty and should abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

127. There were nearly 300,000 Indo-Chinese refugees in China and the Chinese Government had made a great investment in terms of manpower, resources and funding to facilitate their resettlement. By the end of 1992, the special assistance package allocated by the central Government alone had totalled $730 million, not counting inputs by local authorities. The Government also provided a special pension for refugees, amounting to approximately US$ 4.5 million annually. By the end of 1992, it had implemented over 400 projects, with US$ 83 million from United Nations donations. Assistance from UNHCR had played an important role in alleviating the difficulties facing Indo-Chinese refugees in China and was greatly appreciated.

128. Half of those refugees were now able to make their living, thanks to the joint efforts of the Chinese Government and UNHCR. Yet the other half was not yet fully self-sufficient. About 20 per cent of the refugees had an annual income below the poverty line and relied heavily on assistance from the Chinese Government. They faced difficulties such as lack of education and working skills and the shortage of jobs and educational and medical facilities and there was an urgent need to improve basic living conditions, including access to shelter and drinking water.

129. In the past year, the Chinese and Laotian Governments had cooperated in the repatriation of Laotian refugees in China with the assistance of UNHCR. The satisfactory outcome of that joint effort was a successful example of how refugee problems could be solved.

130. UNHCR had made tremendous steps in assisting refugees worldwide. Its role would become even more important in future, in view of the deterioration of the refugee situation. China would continue to cooperate with the international community and UNHCR with a view to contributing to the solution of refugee problems.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.